

Jerusalem – or Hiruharama, as it is called in Maori – is a small settlement inland 70 kilometres from the North Island town of Whanganui.

The population of the settlement is entirely Maori with the partial exception of the Home of Compassion nuns who, while of European or Pacific Island descent, are all adopted members of the Whanganui River tribe. In the early 1990s I stayed at Jerusalem a number of times with Sister Rita, my aunt. 'Sat up and watched go by' is an account of events in the village during one of these visits. The poem finally made the journey back up the River Road last year when it was published in my collection *WINTER I WAS*.

One of the Sisters now living up the river had been mailed a copy of the book. It arrived on a special day. At the end of the financial year, the Hiruharama Marae Fund still had some money left in it so the village elders decided to hire a bus and take the entire population of the settlement down to Palmerston North (150km away) for lunch at 'Valentine's'. The bus, travelling down the winding road which runs adjacent to the river, met the mail-van driving the other way and the settlement's mail was offloaded into the crowded bus. Upon opening the package containing *WINTER I WAS*, Sister Susan Cosgrove read the poem aloud to the high-spirited, receptive passengers heading lunchwards. And so the poem was reunited, happily it has to be said, with its subjects.

ERIC PAWSON

'TIPPED WITH ALPINE GLOW'? MOUNTAINS IN THE NEW ZEALAND IMAGINATION

Arguably New Zealand since European settlement has always been an urban land. It was settled from planted towns, its important trades have always been coordinated through towns, since the early twentieth century a majority of its people have lived in towns. In 'Living Here', Cilla McQueen imagines that 'this place is just one big city' with its 'suburbs strung out in a long line' from north to south, between ocean horizon and mountain ranges (in Eggleton 1999, 14).

In visual terms, however, it is the coastline and the mountains – not the towns – that are the dominant features of the landscape. Less than a quarter of the surface area lies below 200 metres and a considerable portion is above 600 metres. The Southern Alps start at the south western, heavily fiorded tip of the South Island and sweep up its length. All told, there are about 223 named peaks rising above 2300 metres; the highest at 3754 metres being Aoraki-Mount Cook, surrounded by permanent icefields and glaciers. The alpine zone loses prominence in the North Island, but still finds expression as a series of rugged hills, as well as volcanic peaks of the central plateau (Figure 1).

The consequence is that 'Almost every New Zealander lives within sight of the mountains or the oceans, or both. Its landscapes show long ranges and solitary giants, tipped with Alpine glow' (Lloyd 1902, 3). Beyond Christchurch the front ranges encircle the horizon. Nelson is 'skirted all round ... with high hills of an Alpine aspect' (Fell 1927, 107). Across Wellington harbour, the Tararuas loom above the Hutt Valley, snow capped in winter. New Plymouth sits under the continuous presence of 'the mountain', Taranaki. Even from Auckland, the high backbone of the Coromandel peninsula is clear on mid horizon.

In what ways, and to what extent, have the mountains become part of the sense of place of town dwelling New Zealanders? This article explores this question from a number of perspectives for the period from the 1870s to about 1940. It begins with a discussion of the various 'ways of seeing' of nineteenth century Maori and Pakeha upon mountains. It then asks 'whose mountains?' in order to examine the class-based and gendered nature of mountain experience. It concludes with an analysis of the role of mountains in the development of regional and national identities.

Ways of seeing

An indication of early Pakeha pride in mountains is that many of the country's most prominent alpine scenes were portrayed on the first set of pictorial New Zealand postage stamps, issued in 1898. There were thirteen stamps in this set and no less than seven featured mountains. Mount Cook and Milford Sound both appeared twice, with Lake Wakatipu and Mount Earnslaw, Lake Taupo and Tongariro, and the Otira Gorge (with an inset of Mount Ruapehu) once each. Mount Cook was on both the lowest and highest denominations (Franks 1977). Here was an official statement of how New Zealand at the time wished to be seen: in terms of outstanding and distinctive scenery.

However, neither Pakeha nor Maori ways of seeing mountains were straightforward. In the colonial period, Maori have often been described as being in 'fear and awe', even seeking to avoid them; Pakeha in contrast as 'inspired' by the sublimity of what Ruskin proclaimed as 'mountain glory'. But in both peoples, the summits evoked a range of responses, reflecting their roles as the wild and unpredictable meeting points of the terrestrial and celestial worlds. They were then as now places of the imagination, beyond human control. Maori invested the hills with spiritual meaning, as the homes of atua, or gods. They also saw particular peaks as representing, in stone, revered ancestors. In this way, iwi were bound by whakapapa to the landscape (Yoon 1986). Mountains were therefore places of both apprehension and attachment.

Such a portrayal however, obscures the very practical relationship that many Maori had with mountains. That they had named peaks, ridges, lakes and passes is indicative of this. Archaeological evidence points to use of many sites for food

gathering as well as routeways for travel. For instance the surveyor John Barnicoat recorded how the Maori of Foveaux Strait 'sometimes make excursions to the Snowy mountains and catch 300 woodhens per night'. They thus had a bank of knowledge of alpine areas that impressed itself on Pakeha making their own first faltering acquaintance with the hills. Walter Mantell, the naturalist, observed how his guide Te Wharekorari recited a long list of important sites, such as wetlands, up the Waitaki valley into the mountainous South Island interior. There was a network of trails across the Alps, connecting populations in the east with sites of greenstone in the west, and food sources in between (Waitangi Tribunal 1991).

Pakeha were thus reliant on Maori to act as guides in mountain areas. Not all of those who chose not to survive. Leonard Harper 'discovered' the Harper Pass from Canterbury across the Alps to the West Coast, travelling 'in the company of Mr Loch and four Kaiapoi natives' (*Lyttelton Times*, January 20, 1858). In 1863 John Henry Whitcombe, the Canterbury Provincial Surveyor, attempted the apparently shorter pass that bears his name with a Swiss companion alone. His fate was to drown in the Taramakau river, trying to save himself from starvation after a badly miscalculated journey over treacherous terrain (Pascoe 1960). One of the epics of exploration in colonial New Zealand was that of Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner from Nelson down the West Coast in 1846. But all the way they were accompanied by Kehu, their guide, and as they progressed southward they 'recognised mountains, hills, rivers, streams, headlands and other natural features from [his] prior description' (Mitchell 1948, 19).

Such journeys were undertaken for material ends, and this was reflected in their timing, routing and representation (Overton 1978). Earlier in 1846, Heaphy and Brunner had been joined on a journey into the Nelson Lakes district by William Fox, New Zealand Company agent, and later politician and four-time Premier. Fox was also a prolific painter. He employed a Claudian style of perspective in his views of the valleys and lakes that the explorers encountered. European eyes appropriated the land for European use, renaming it as well: Lake Rotoroa became 'Lake Howick'. Fox ruminated on how it might become a spa, with hotel and pleasure boats (Trevelyan 2000). It has been said of him that he recorded 'not so much unspoiled primeval nature, but potential productivity' (Sotheran 1978, 45). This was very much what the Company's members in London wished to see in the watercolours that Fox enclosed with his written dispatches to them.

Heaphy, Brunner and Fox were in search of places into which the pastoralists of the hemmed in colony of Nelson could expand. A year earlier, Fox had painted 'The Wairau Plain', not long after a dispute over surveying in which some Nelson settlers had been killed by Ngati Toa. The picture showed a wide, empty expanse, beneath a horizon of mountains, with several Maori prominently in the foreground. He returned in 1848, soon after its purchase by the government, painting a very similar scene, albeit from a different vantage point. In place of the Maori, however, he inserted an exploring party looking over 'the extensive green and grassy plain desired by settlers' (King 2000, 86). There was some truth in Samuel Butler's playful remark

that 'A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it', good for sheep (Butler 1863, 70).

Both Fox and Butler saw other things in nature as well. Fox, within two years of the establishment of the Yellowstone national park by the United States government, raised the concept in official circles here as a means of protecting the features of the thermal district of 'Rotomahana' (Harris 1974). Butler, catching his first glimpse of Mount Cook, 'was struck almost breathless by the wonderful mountain that burst on my sight. The effect was startling' (1863, 69). Yet the sublime too was employed in the interests of development. In 1865-66 the well known Australian-based painter Nicholas Chevalier visited the South Island to undertake a painting tour. He was paid sums of two hundred pounds by both the Otago and the Canterbury Provincial Councils to produce a series of his spacious, atmospheric paintings that would, by being shown overseas, encourage immigration and tourism (Day 1981; Roberts 1992).

Chevalier's paintings have been noted for their sense of calm and tranquility opening up landscape before the viewer: 'in effect providing vicarious possession of the land represented' (Bell 1987, 80). The *Lyttelton Times*, commenting on the exhibition that the artist held on his return to Christchurch from his Alpine expeditions, took a more prosaic view, but one that was to become a growing refrain: 'To those who have seen little more of New Zealand scenery than is comprised in the dreary plains of this province, the collection will be a delightful surprise, as it contains scenes that may fairly vie in beauty with those of any country in the world' (4 July 1866).

Whose mountains?

The association of scenic beauty with potential fields of colonisation, and the growing prospects of Victorian tourism, were therefore the triggers that turned the commodifier's gaze to the mountains. Referring to another of the prominent artists of the time, the *Illustrated New Zealand Herald* claimed that 'the chief characteristics of New Zealand scenery have become familiar to the Australian public, and that they have done so is to a large extent due to the pictures of Mr Gully' (September 21, 1878). This monthly newspaper was published in Dunedin and described itself as 'for Home readers'. Its regular reproductions of John Gully's pictures would therefore have extended his audience to the United Kingdom. Nicholas Chevalier was also attaining wide notice. On his return to Melbourne, he exhibited over 200 sketches and watercolours from his South Island tour. In 1867, he sent 49 to the Paris International Exhibition, and showed three times that number, once he had resettled in Britain, at the Crystal Palace four years after that (Bell 1987; Roberts 1992).

In New Zealand, such exhibitions, albeit on a smaller scale, became regular markers of colonial urban life. The latest pictures and photographs of mountain scenery were available at them for many people to see. Gully first exhibited at the

Dunedin Exhibition in 1865, along with other artists like JC Richmond, John Buchanan and Fox himself. These events offered most town dwellers as close an experience of the mountains as they were going to get, given the difficulties of travel and time needed to get close to even a place such as Mount Cook. Otherwise the landscapes portrayed were accessible only to a privileged or adventurous few (hence the tenor of the *Lyttelton Times*' response to Chevalier's 1866 exhibition). Not many settlers could afford to venture into the Alps to enjoy Ruskin's mountain glory.

Nonetheless, parts of New Zealand mountain regions were being visited for pleasure relatively early. Gully's famous scenes of the Fiordland Sounds represented and popularised this district. Initially, the Sounds could only be seen by summertime excursion on a steamer from Melbourne, such as the 'Alhambra' which visited in 1874 (*Otago Witness*, 28 March). Soon the intercolonial steamers between Melbourne and New Zealand were also calling at one or other of the Sounds, usually Milford, in the summer months. In 1877, the Union Steam Ship Company started its 'alpine excursion by steamer' from Port Chalmers, near Dunedin, to Fiordland (USSCo 1884; King 1988). A traveller on one of these noted that the vessel was carrying 250 passengers and crew, but that another 50 hopefuls had been turned away (Hingston 1883). By 1884, there were two such excursions each January.

Other visitors went overland. One alpine tourist route was from Bluff, north to the Otago Lakes – often then called the 'Lake District' – and back to Dunedin. The second was the road from Christchurch, over the main divide at Arthurs Pass, to the West Coast. Travellers on both routes were prone to all sorts of comparisons as they attempted to fit the scenery into a European frame of reference. Anthony Trollope found a steamer at Kingston, on the lake south of Queenstown, even in 1872. 'I do not know that lake scenery can be finer than that of the upper ten miles of Wakatipu', he wrote, after observing that 'In New Zealand everything is English' (Trollope 1874, 43-50). A decade later, the Revd. W.S. Green found that 'Wakatipu is amazingly beautiful; the only lake in Europe which can surpass it is Lucerne' (Green 1883, 303).

The Fiordland Sounds however were more likely to be compared with Norway, whereas the Otira road was described by a visitor writing in *The English Illustrated Magazine* as 'one of the sights of the world ... compared with which in dizzy boldness of engineering and road-making, those of which I have had experience – whether in the Alps, the Carpathians, the Balkans, or the Himalayas, are tame and prosaic'. This was quoted with approval in *Maoriland*, the Union Steamship Company's guide to New Zealand (1884, 116). One description which has stuck through time was the headline given by the editor of the London *Spectator* to an article by Blanche Baughan on the Milford Track: 'The finest walk in the world' (Baughan 1917). The Track had been opened in the late 1880s, with government encouragement, as a means of reaching Milford Sound overland.

The Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 'Overland to Milford Sound', published in 1903, claimed that 'Everything is Titanic in scale'. This included the price of access. A package covering first class return rail travel from Dunedin to Lumsden,

coach to Te Anau, and boat from there to the start of the track was nearly fifteen pounds. Actual numbers of people making such journeys were therefore small. Only 287 people walked the track in the 1905-6 season, although within three seasons this had risen to 484.[1]

The visitor figures for the Hermitage hotel at Mount Cook are broadly similar. It had been opened in 1885 before being taken over by the government 11 years later. But the cost and time required to reach it ensured that access was out of reach of all but the most leisured. In 1905-6, the hotel had 185 guests. Next year the numbers rose to 304, after the coach had been superseded by a motor service, which reduced travel time from two days to one from the rail head at Fairlie. This was better than the four days it had taken the Revd Green in 1882. Yet in 1913-14, there were still only 536 guests.[2] Ten years later, the car fare was six pounds return from Timaru, and hotels a pound a day (with another pound a day for a guide).

The most accessible mountains before the First World War were in the North Island. Mount Taranaki is close to the town of New Plymouth, which itself had been connected by rail to the capital, Wellington, by 1885. In the 'record season' of 1902/3 the combined number of visitors to the three houses on the mountain, at North Egmont, East Egmont and Dawson Falls, was about 2 500.[3] More than a thousand people climbed Mount Holdsworth in the Tararua, accessible from Wellington, in 1910 (Macleay 1994, 112). These are far bigger figures than for the alpine districts of the South Island, but they are still not large, compared with the growing popularity of the mountains in the 1920s and thirties.

Memories of mountains and men?

The subheading is the title of Arthur Harper's (1946) book about his exploits in the Alps of New Zealand and Europe. Much of the narrative about alpine tourist and sporting activity is openly masculinist. As Revd Green put it, having seen photographs of the Southern Alps at the British Association meeting in York in 1881, 'they showed me enough to convince me that Mount Cook was a splendid peak, and the conquest well worth the trouble of the long journey'. That he was not successful left the field open for local climbers, three of whom, George Graham, Jack Clarke and Tom Fyfe, reached the summit on Christmas Day 1894, thereby just beating a visiting Englishman, Edward Fitzgerald. 'Mount Cook has at last been conquered' proclaimed the *Otago Witness* (January 3, 1895). According to *The Press*, they had 'attacked the mountain from the Hooker side', from which they succeeded 'in surmounting it' (January 1, 1895).

Presumably they had done so following the advice of G E Mannerling, of the newly founded New Zealand Alpine Club that '...the very presence of danger draws out of a man all the caution he possesses, and brings his most admirable qualities into

play' (1892, 101). Of course women were not formally debarred from entering the mountains. The New Zealand Alpine Club (1891) and most later mountain clubs allowed women to join. But convention forbade them to exceed the limits of socially constructed feminine behaviour. Writing the text to accompany chromo-lithographs of Gully's watercolours in *New Zealand Scenery*, von Haast declared of 'Mount Cook with the Hooker glacier', that 'All at once a view of greater magnificence than the most enthusiastic imagination can conceive bursts upon the traveller as he ascends.... The glaciers here are so easy of access that even ladies find little trouble in the ascent, as they can be reached without difficulty by riding up to their terminal face on horseback' (Gully 1877).

The clearest statement of the power of such narrative occurs in the book written by one of the most accomplished early alpinists, the Sydney woman Freda du Faur. Like Green, she had seen photographs of the Southern Alps at an exhibition, the Christchurch International Exhibition of 1906-7. She paid several subsequent visits to the Hermitage and climbed Mount Cook and Mount Tasman on a number of occasions. But in her book she relates the way in which older women at the hotel 'implored' her not to venture into the mountains alone with a male guide (the irreproachable Peter Graham), lest she lose her reputation as a woman. The matter was resolved by taking a porter as chaperone, which the climber resented not least due to the extra cost of one pound a day (du Faur 1915, 35-6).

Nonetheless, the attractions of the mountains for tourists were frequently packaged with feminine imagery. 'Away she goes!' cried the advertisement for the Great Alpine Carnival at Mount Cook in July 1923. It was headed by girl on skis leaping into the air off the slopes, '...we offer you the HAPPIEST SEVEN DAY'S HOLIDAY OF YOUR LIFE' proclaimed an earlier handbill, with an attractively attired woman skiing briskly off from the Hermitage. The hotel itself was represented in the 1920s as having all the advantages for men of a feminised environment: 'Imagine big, crackling log fires, food fit for a king, music, dancing, wines, laughter: ... servants who work to the Golden Rule'. This was a little more subtle than the 1970s brochure picturing a bikini clad girl lying in the tussock in front of Mount Cook [4].

Such gendered representations obscure the active role that women played in surveying parties, as tourists and as climbers. There are countless examples of adventurous women tourists. Caroline Chevalier accompanied her husband on horseback on his month long painting trip between Christchurch and the West Coast in 1866. They went by the northern route over Harpers Pass, returning via Otira. At the turn of the century, Constance Astley travelled the country with a close woman friend. They ascended the Tasman and Mueller glaciers with Jack Clarke as their guide. He cooked for them in the Ball Hut, a situation that posed no threats to feminine virtue as there were two ladies (de Fresnes 1997). In 1903, he was the guide for three women who crossed the Copland Pass, including the accomplished mountaineers Constance Barnicoat and Jane Thomson. A little later Maud Moreland rode with a partner on horseback seven to eight hundred miles down the West Coast, through the Haast Pass, and back to Christchurch. Commenting on the roadless area

of south Westland beyond the Fox River, she 'found I was really the first lady tourist to reach this point' (1911, 68).

In the summer of 1908/9, 137 of the 484 people who walked the Milford Track were women, although this was reported as if it were out of the ordinary: 'an important point ... is the number of ladies who this season made the journey'.^[5] What may be more surprising is the number of women climbers at that time in the Southern Alps. Not only were they climbing in mixed parties, usually with guides as was then the convention, but also alone, ie one woman climber with a guide (Table 1). During the First World War, as many as a third of the high ascents from the Hermitage were by single women. As Freda du Faur commented: 'now, five years after my first fight for individual freedom, the girl climber at the Hermitage need expect nothing worse than raised eyebrows when she starts out unchaperoned and clad in climbing costume' (1915, 37). The make up of parties did not change significantly after the war, although by the mid 1920s, a growing number of men were climbing guideless.

The feats of climbers such as Barnicoat, Thomson, Margaret Lorimer and Kate Gardiner are now recorded in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. That they have been lost sight of for so long owes something to male control of New Zealand alpine narratives by writers such as the prolific John Pascoe. He was also an early member of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club, founded as the Christchurch Tramping Club in 1925, which did not admit women as members until the late 1970s. Nonetheless, other clubs, such as those at Victoria and Otago Universities, and the famous Tararua Tramping Club (TTC), did a great deal to promote mountain access for working women as well as large numbers of working men (Maclean 1994).

Mountains in regional and national identities

In the 1920s and thirties, the hills and mountains became accessible to far greater numbers of people, with experience of them being much more widely shared. This was partly due to the efforts of the recreational clubs. But it also reflected encouragement from the state. In the 1920s, the railways department, extending its business, started to provide day and holiday excursions to mountain areas. It offered winter excursions into 'Wonderful Westland', combining road travel with that by rail to Hokitika. It ran day return outings from Christchurch to 'the alpine wonderland of Arthurs Pass'. In the early 1930s, about ten thousand people a year were making this trip. Passengers were 'encouraged to accompany a well-informed railway officer on the walk from Canterbury across the ridge of the Alps into Westland', through the Otira Gorge to the waiting train. Extraordinarily, about nine tenths of them 'decide to have this exhilarating exercise'.^[6]

The state was in fact keen to encourage more people to use the mountains for pleasure. The first Labour Government in the 1930s invested in alpine roading

because, as its Minister of Works put it, we are 'firmly of the opinion that the natural beauties of our country shall be within easy reach of all our citizens and not merely those who visit from overseas'.^[7] The Lewis Pass road between north Canterbury, Nelson and the West Coast was opened in 1937, and works parties were put onto the Haast Pass and Milford Sound highways (although neither was finished until well after the second world war). The summer track under the North Island volcanoes, from Waiouru to Taupo – today 'the Desert Road', part of the main highway through the North Island – was also being upgraded.

This policy was running in parallel with another, aimed at improving participation in outdoor activities. In the course of the passage of the Physical Welfare and Recreation bill in 1937, the Minister of Internal Affairs asserted that 'good physical and mental health should be the foundation of a good life, besides making the individual profitable to the nation.... Physical fitness gives confidence to the individual; its absence weakens the moral fibre of the nation' (NZPD vol 249, 415). This argument reflected the international movement, then much in vogue, for 'rational recreation' (Johnston and Pawson 1994). Under the resulting Act, government assistance was provided for cutting tracks and setting up huts in the mountains. In the long run, the efforts of urban-based clubs and associations were more significant. The Christchurch Beautifying Association (founded in 1897) was pressuring parliament before the turn of the century to establish a national park in the Arthurs Pass-Otira district (Harris 1974). Land was reserved for this purpose in 1901; the park was gazetted in 1929.

The TTC proposed in 1936 that the Tararua Ranges be set aside as a national park. The idea was to construct a network of new huts and tracks, with improved road access, as Wellington's Centennial Memorial. The idea was not without detractors (many younger club members wished to keep the hills exclusive) – when forwarded for official consideration, it was turned down as lacking wide enough appeal (Maclean 1994). In 1924, the interestingly named Auckland Blue Mountains Society called for creation of a park in the Waitakere Ranges (dismissed by John Pascoe as for 'hedge-hopping'), on the western fringe of Auckland. A year later the Waitakere Association was founded to seek national park status. In the late 1930s, the 'Waitakere National Park' was the goal of those who wished it to become Auckland's centennial monument, as 'a perpetual source of health and beauty'. This was attained, in 1941, but with the status of 'regional' rather than national park.

If a closer identification was being forged between regional populations and the hills, what of their place in the national imagination? Samuel Butler said of Mount Cook that 'There is a glorious field for the members of the Alpine Club here. Mount Cook awaits them, and he who first scales it will be crowned with undying laurels' (1863, 70). It might have been anticipated then, that when this event occurred at Christmas 1894, there would have been an outburst of patriotic pride. Far from it. The Christchurch Press was short on enthusiasm and curmudgeonly. Why hadn't the New Zealand climbers 'played the game' and waited to the take the Englishman Fitzgerald with them? The *Otago Witness* was more enthusiastic, but the *Otago Daily Times* and

the *Oamaru Herald* (both close to the release of the news at Timaru) ignored the event as did Auckland's *New Zealand Herald*. It was hardly, as was claimed a century later, a symbolic event not to be underestimated in its contribution to [national] self-respect (Molloy 1983, 7).

This came instead in more utilitarian ways, with the projection of alpine scenery as New Zealand's face to the world. However this did not on the whole involve any great intimacy with the hills. 'The general crowd of New Zealanders likes to read the laudatory remarks of tourists, [but] if there is a sentimental interest in the country for its own sake, its remains more or less inarticulate', wrote Monte Holcroft in a prize-winning essay at the time of the 1940 Centennial. In an uncanny echo of today's careless enthusiasm for imagined clean, green virtues, he continued: 'the nearest approach to it, perhaps, is a kind of complacency, as if the beauty of the land were something for which we were somehow responsible' (Holcroft 1950, 22-3). This perspective was consistent with some of the better literary writing of the 1930s. It does however miss one important element of growing identity with the idea of the hills.

This was the sense in which they were increasingly imagined as the place within which the restricting routines of urban life could be, at least momentarily, broken. The increasingly popular 'man alone' myth was one representation of this. But this was merely one front to the view that towns were places of sin and pollution, lacking the challenges of a past colonial life in the wilderness, and inducing a lack of fitness and purpose in the national character. Such ideas underlie the 1930s embrace of 'rational recreation', of the state's enthusiasm for encouraging outdoor activity, and a persistent underlying anxiety – well illustrated by Fairburn (1975) – about what many saw as the parasitic nature of towns.

The promoters of the Hermitage at Mount Cook, for many years the only real alpine resort in the country, cleverly tapped in to these underlying fears. One of their regular by-lines for the hotel was that it was 'Thousands of Feet Above Worry Level', and advertisements in the 1920s frequently contrasted the virtues of alpine freedom with the constricting confinements of office work. Its 'Great Alpine Carnival' was advertised in the *Christchurch Press* (July 15, 1923) with a lengthy poem, including the lines:

The air is so dry, pure, clear and invigorating -
As to make the winter climate at the Hermitage -
The most delightful, cheering and healthful in the Dominion -
GET AWAY FROM THE FOGGY, STUFFY TOWNS -
Away to the pure, cleansing mountain heights -

Such claims were nonetheless inherently contradictory: whilst the Hermitage was isolated, it had of necessity to maintain urban comforts. Guests were asked to 'imagine a spacious, luxurious' home, 'with every modern convenience, beautifully warmed by a special system of central heating'. [8] The wild could not be allowed to intrude too far.

But for some, the very appeal of the hills was the release enabled from the restraints of propriety. The opportunities offered by recreational clubs like the TTC for men and women to socialise more freely, to dress in less inhibited ways, and to travel further afield with the benefit of group transport, made their mark. Freda du Faur, reflecting on her climbing feats in the Southern Alps, summed this up in characteristically forthright fashion. 'It is some consolation to have achieved as much as this, and to have blazed one more little path through ignorant convention, and added one tiny spark to the ever-growing beacon lighted by women of this generation to help their fellow travellers climb out of the dark woods and valleys of conventional tradition and gain the fresh, invigorating air and wider viewpoint of the mountain tops' (1915, 37).

Conclusion

This essay has attempted to portray something of the meaning of mountains to New Zealanders between mid Victorian times and the second world war in terms of culture, class, gender and regional and national identities. Inevitably the mountains have infused the imagination of New Zealanders, with so many living within sight, or beneath them. But this occurred in no simple way. Pakeha pride could be countenanced by Pakeha gloom, when mountains seemed to block prospects of settlement or offend colonial sensibilities. 'A dismal looking country ... fearfully mountainous, some of them almost perpendicular' was the verdict of a prospective Nelson settler in 1859 (in Overton 1978, 34). Yet with the pictorial stamp issue of 1898, possession of sublime views was framed as part of distinctive face for New Zealand. A century later, alpine scenery is routinely commodified as the stage upon which the country and its products are projected to the world.

Spiritual associations persist, however. Many Maori still identify with particular peaks. When Aoraki was returned to the nation by Ngai Tahu, having been awarded to them as part of their treaty settlement in the 1990s, a tribal request was made that climbers not stand on the summit, 'because Aoraki is an ancestor, and the sacred part of the body is the head, it is tapu to stand on top of the mountain' (in Newton 1999, 93). For many Pakeha, the mountains are a counterpoint to urban monotony, places of quiet away from the hubbub of the towns. One of the best loved national stamp issues was that commemorating peace in 1946, in which the halfpenny value illustrated the famous reflection of Mount Cook in the still waters of Westland's Lake Mathieson, and the ninepenny showed the glacier through the glass chancel window of the church at Franz Josef.

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Notes

- [1] Annual Report of the Tourist and Health Resorts Department, *AJHR*, H2, 1906: 10-11; 1909: 15.
- [2] *AJHR*, H2, 1906: 10-11; 1909: 15; 1914: 4.
- [3] Annual Report of Department of Lands and Survey, *AJHR*, C1, 1903: 153.
- [4] Pamphlet collection, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
- [5] *AJHR* H2 1909: 15
- [6] 'Winter Excursions, Wonderful Westland' (1927); 'World-Famed Otira Walk', pamphlet collection, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
- [7] Annual Report of the Ministry of Works, *AJHR*, D1, 1936: xi.
- [8] Pamphlet collection, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

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